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ABSTRACT

In celebration of the International Year of the Child (IYC), this journal (1) proposes two additions to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child: the right to be well taught and the right to be taught a love of reading and writing; and (2) provides practical suggestions for teachers, parents, students, and principals to help them actively participate in the IYC through school projects, classroom and family activities, helping others, and positive attitudes. The first section emphasizes the tremendous influence that teachers have on their students and discusses how teachers can contribute to IYC in both the classroom and the school as a whole. The second section provides ideas to help school principals create an ideal educational environment and stimulate whole school projects. Intended for teachers, the third section contains ideas for classroom activities and special projects that improve classroom communication and children's confidence as learners. The fourth section speaks to parents, suggesting ways to reinforce children's school activities at home through talking, reading, and writing. Special gift ideas emphasizing such interaction are presented. The final section contains a message for children, encouraging them to actively participate in the IYC by helping other people and themselves. (JD)

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PRIMARY ENGLISH
NOTES . . .

13

Classroom Notes . . . from the Primary English Teaching Association

Let's Make it THEIR YEAR!

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PETA would add two planks:

- The right to be well taught.
- The right to be taught a love of reading and writing.

1979 • International Year of the Child...

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How to Make the Most of This Year

What Can Teachers Do?

Obviously the International Year of the Child has captured the public imagination. The media are full of it. Teachers will be expected to contribute something, both in the classroom and in the school as a whole. But what?

The temptation is to think of children who are tragically suffering in many parts of the world—and to make a charitable gesture from afar . . . There is certainly room for that. But this is also the Year of Everychild in every classroom! What do we do this year for every single one of them?

PETA says begin with, 'The Right of Every Child to be Well Taught', and include prominently the right to be taught to love reading and writing (not only taught the mechanics). Thus we acknowledge our profound responsibility as teachers . . . But to do *precisely* what? This P.E.N. offers detailed suggestions . . .

We suggest that among a hundred possible 'responsibilities', the teacher might keep four key thoughts in mind this year:

1. To love children and love teaching them.
2. To build the parent-teacher partnership because parents too are the children's teachers.
3. To build the self-concept of each child—self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance—as an even more important force in learning than instruction itself.
4. To teach well, with an infectious expectation that every child will succeed regardless of age, sex, background, or race—in school years and on into later life.

Teaching is a profession under attack! Let's reply even more forcefully this year to the continual uninformed sniping:

- if what you are doing in class is working
- if your pupils are enjoying learning
- if they are developing as persons and intellectually, then stand by what you are doing . . .

YOU ARE FIGHTING FOR THE CHILDREN!

P.E.N. #13 was written and illustrated for the International Year of the Child by Pat Edwards, PETA's Executive Director, a teacher-writer, and formerly primary school principal. — Ed.

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Teacher—an Influence for Life!

An outstanding first-grade teacher can influence children far more than she, he or anyone realises—and the influence can be lifelong . . .

"Researchers at McGill University in Montreal studied the life-styles and achievements of 59 persons who were first graders 25 years ago in a school in an impoverished Montreal neighbourhood. They found that 64 percent of the pupils of a teacher identified only as 'Miss A' moved into responsible jobs, good homes and higher social classes as adults, while only 29 percent of the students of all other teachers at the school did likewise.

"In addition to providing a good grounding in basic skills, the study notes 'Miss A' built up students' confidence in themselves. 'She gave them the impression that they were bright,' the researchers said. 'She expected that children could do well regardless of age, sex, background or race.' — *Teacher, USA*, Nov. 1978

How Best Use This P.E.N.?

This P.E.N. suggests two lines of practical activity:

- Every classroom/school parent-teacher activity this year can, with a little imagination, be linked with IYC/1979;
- Every adult and every child can help IYC to succeed . . .

Principal —with school projects and attitudes, p. 3

Teachers —with classroom activities and attitudes, p. 4

Parents —with family activities and attitudes, p. 5

Pupils —with ways to help other children, p. 6

Special Items: Pages 5 and 6 have been specially printed so that the school can immediately duplicate them. They may be offered at the parents' meeting or directly sent home by the Principal.

We hope you will ransack this P.E.N. for ideas that fit the special needs of the school, the classroom and, above all, the individual child. No doubt you will add many ideas of your own. If so, will you please let us know of your most exciting and successful projects? Perhaps send a photo?

Ideas for the Principal and School



A Small Problem: How can I make the years they'll spend in my school 'the best years of their lives'?

1. **Make school a place where all the adults and children learn to encourage one another . . .** Principal encouraging teachers . . . Teachers encouraging children . . . Pupil helping pupil, especially the older helping the younger . . . Working co-operatively in pairs and groups . . . Teachers co-operating by planning and working together at all levels.

'Schooling is not a race; its major objective is not to identify winners and losers, but to give maximum assistance to all young people growing up.' *Australian Schools Commission Report, 1976-8*

2. **Make school a place where it is easy and natural to learn . . .** Consider the school as a 'learning environment'—how conducive to learning? . . . Do some learning difficulties come from causes as simple as rooms that are too hot or airless or crowded or noisy? . . . Informal activities are often the most effective learning techniques; but insist on 'library-level QUIET' (not necessarily silence) when reading, writing, calculating, etc.

3. **Make school a place where children read and write every day with pleasure . . .** Where, in every classroom, there is reading aloud to them every day . . . And SSR (sustained silent reading)—their own self-chosen reading for pleasure, quite apart from imposed exercise-type reading which, however necessary, does not win them to a love of reading . . . Similarly, some daily, personal, self-chosen writing, SSW (sustained silent writing)—as in a 'Journal' or 'Logbook'. (See PETA's 1978 journal *Better Reading/Writing—Now!*, pp. 108-112 on SSR and SSW.)

4. **Make school a place where children learn to be proudly Australian . . .** Not in the spirit of aggressive nationalism but to be culturally distinctive . . . Offset the flood of imported TV programs, etc., with Australian history, stories, books, art, songs, poems, etc. . . . Not only the explorers, squatters and diggers, but the Aborigines, farmers, town and city people—and women and children as well as men!

5. **Make school a comfortable place, 'like a good home' . . .** There used to be a terrible gap between home and school, so that children uniformly hated school—*how far has this changed?*—A large question worth raising at a special staff meeting for IYC . . . *One suggestion:* A standing invitation to all parents, grandparents and community friends to attend a monthly (or weekly) assembly, held in the commercial lunch period so local working parents can come—each class presents a short item.

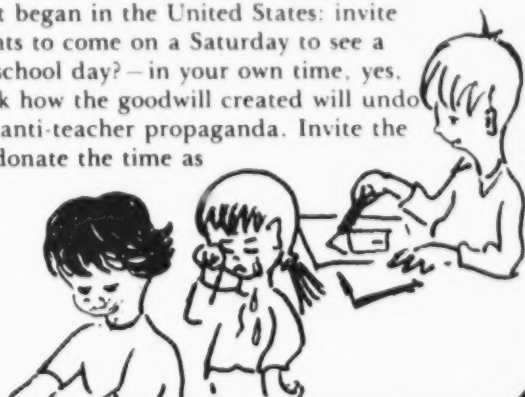
Whole School Projects for Next Staff Meeting

1. **Asking Parents to Help.** At a staff brainstorming session, list the ways parents can help children at home. Edit down to the most practical suggestions, then, for a Term, send home each Monday one of these as 'This Week's Home-learning Hint'.

2. **International Social Studies Program.** Each class (or Year) undertakes to study children of a particular country and to report to the whole school. Rostered throughout the year, they might present: Classroom display of pictures, stories, poems, etc.; display of pupil-made books for browsing; collection of proverbs, folk stories, fables, etc.; oral presentations at assembly; craft display of pupil-made flags, emblems, models, maps, etc. (Invite parents to presentation.)

3. **Swap a Class with Another School.** This works well between city and country, but also effective within same district. Whether for a day or a week, it is a splendid way for pupils to compare their problems with others.

4. **A Saturday School Session.** In building the teacher-parent partnership, consider the child whose parents work and can't get to see the school. Why not try the successful new idea that began in the United States: invite all parents to come on a Saturday to see a regular school day?—in your own time, yes, but think how the goodwill created will undo years of anti-teacher propaganda. Invite the staff to donate the time as an IYC gesture.



Ideas for the Classroom Teacher



Thirty-odd Big Problems:

How can I make each child in my class a confident learner?

1. Boost Each Child's Self-esteem

... Relate warmly to each child every day ... Greet, encourage, praise ... Contrive to give daily wins and avoid failure ... *One suggestion:* On a large poster, list one or two glowing facts about each pupil, e.g. fine singer, always helpful, can speak Italian. Or: set up a 'Kid of the Week' Program; s/he enjoys special privileges, sits in special place, brings in treasured possessions to share, etc.



2. Encourage Sensitivity to Others ... Applaud every example of thoughtfulness ... Discuss the less-well-off children of other lands ... The physically or intellectually 'different' child; use Alan Marshall's *I Can Jump Puddles*; celebrate Helen Keller's birthday, 27 June, perhaps by raising money for a charity that helps children in need.

3. Increase Awareness of Other Peoples

... Show that you value ethnic diversity ... Use different family backgrounds of pupils to show interest in national recipes, dress, music, customs, language ... And Aboriginal culture (start with *The Aboriginal Children's History of Australia*, Rigby) ... The year's Read-to-the-Children program could feature stories from as many countries as possible.

4. Promote Sex Equality ... See that girls and boys share equally in school tasks ... Prefer books in which there is no sex stereotyping ... Welcome questions and discussion about economic and social equality of opportunity, especially about jobs they are considering.

5. Foster Sharing with Older People

Anything to bridge the 'generation gap' ... Parents helping at school or in the classroom ... Especially parents helping with reading, e.g. adult and child reading to each other ... A class can adopt an 'extra' grandparent, e.g. local senior citizens' club may help—leading to letters, invitations to school functions, sending pupil-made birthday, Easter, etc., cards ... Or a class or group can visit a nursing home to sing, etc.

Improve Classroom Communication

- Does TALK flow—at the right times—in your class? (See P.E.N. 12, 'Talking and Listening')
- Does WRITING flow? Not just imposed, exercise-type writing but freer forms? (See all the suggestions in PETA's 1978 journal *Better Reading/Writing—now!*, pp. 56-8, 82-4, 99, 104, 110-12, 137-9, 147-68, 177-9.) Meanwhile, here is one suggestion ...

Become a Note-writing Class

Instead of banning note-writing as of old—praise it and promote it! Isn't it almost the only thoroughly *real* writing children do? It can develop language skills while spreading a little joy.

- **Classroom Mailbox.** Make a magnificent red one in wood or cardboard. All notes to pass through it. Every pupil gets a turn as 'postie' for a day, clears and delivers the letters.
- **Notes on Everything.** Write to anyone about anything at any time. Whenever there's a few spare minutes, the teacher can say, 'Let's write a note' ... to friends, to teachers, to the librarian, to the principal.
- **Teacher as Note-writer.** Write to the child, especially to praise or say thanks—for 'reading so well, today, George', or 'tidying the Book Corner, Tony', or 'being so happy all day, Maria'. And extend to parents ... short spontaneous notes: Dear ... , Today Helen got all her Maths problems right! Isn't that marvellous?'

Some Special Projects

- For example, design and build ...
 - a small cubby house in the school grounds
 - a puppet theatre for classroom use
 - enormous building blocks for the Kindergarten.
- Such projects can involve skills of measuring, calculating, weighing, while being a fun activity. The planning and execution help language activity.
- Why not learn some of these ...
 - to sing 'Happy Birthday' in many languages
 - to write 'Merry Christmas' in many languages
 - to learn a children's game from another land and demonstrate such skills on UN Day, 24 October?



International Year of the Child



A Message for Parents

This year many of your child's school activities are linked with the International Year of the Child. But, as you know only too well, he or she spends much more time at home than at school. So we've put together some *suggestions* that can help your family contribute to this special Year. Most of these will help to increase your child's interest in learning, particularly in learning *and enjoying* reading and writing . . . Oh, and do watch out for special school activities this year.

Talking, Reading, Writing

- **Talk It Over.** Hold a family discussion on IYC, what it means and what might be done about it; and decide to keep a scrapbook of cuttings, pictures, etc., about it.
- **Read Together.** Visit the local library together. Get books for all the family. Especially stories about children of other countries. And read aloud to your children every night.
- **Family 'Read-in'.** Set apart one night a week for this—a time of uninterrupted silent reading similar to what many schools do nowadays. But Mum and Dad must read too. Start perhaps with a short period, say, 10 minutes for young ones, and extend as the idea catches on . . . They can even forget TV!
- **Write Your Biography.** Teachers find many children know little of their parents' backgrounds. Why not write a small book about *your* schooldays, parents, homelife, problems, triumphs?
- **Become an Author.** Encouraged by your efforts at biography, try writing a little book about your child—his or her tastes, talents, babyhood, doings, etc. Or write some familiar story.
- **Keep a Family Year Book.** Into it can go not only photos but written accounts of holidays, outings, films, TV programs, etc., and children's own writing and drawings, and heights and weights—anything and everything! (Select items and put together at Christmas for a grandparent.)
- **Write Letters Together.** Letters to relatives are best when every member of the family writes a section. (Pre-schoolers can draw something.)

A Book That Tells So Much. For hundreds of other ideas about children 5-11 years old, we recommend Barry and Janet Dwyer's *Best Years of Their Lives*. Published by the Primary English Teaching Association, Box 55, PO Gordon, NSW 2072, it has 96 pages and is lavishly illustrated. (\$2.95 post free.)

Special Gifts in a Special Year

In IYC/1979 think up gifts that are *different*, avoiding bought toys, printed cards, and commercial entertainment:

- **A Gift of Time.** Your time! By writing and presenting 'Promises', e.g. 'I'll read you a story every night', 'I'll play Monopoly or Scrabble next wet afternoon', 'I'll listen for 10 minutes without interrupting when you get home from school'.
- **Personally Made Cards.** Your own drawings and words on greeting cards, get-well cards, etc.
- **Anything Handmade.** Anything from gingerbread men to sewing, weaving, woodwork, sculpture, jewellery, etc.
- **Indoor Plants.** Plants in pots, or seeds, or even a patch in the garden—for the pleasure of growing things.
- **A Book for Helen.** (Or George or . . .) Stories, jokes, puzzles, pictures cut from newspapers and magazines and glued together—with a bright, attractive cover.
- **Invitations.** Come up with surprise invitations, e.g. to a barbecue, picnic, musical evening—addressed to the family of a child with whom your child plays, or a local family with a different ethnic background, etc.
- **Family Celebrations They'll Never Forget**
 - ☐ Rise at dawn and go to a beach, park, or river.
 - ☐ Rise before dawn to watch the sun rise.
 - ☐ Have a breakfast picnic and 'toast' the new day.
 - ☐ Invite friends to an old-fashioned sing-song.
 - ☐ Hold a 'ghostly' dress-up party in the semi-dark.
 - ☐ Read ghost stories, with a single candle burning.
 - ☐ Camp out under the stars, even in the backyard.

International Year of the Child



A Message for Children

What have you heard about IYC? It is a Year concerned with *helping*. Many adults will be trying to do more than is usually done to help children who are in trouble – not only in other countries but also in Australia. There is no reason why children themselves can't join in this **HELPING** movement. Would you like to do so?

First, look around you. Aren't there children in your school or street who can be given a helping hand – perhaps a new girl who hasn't any friends, or a boy who is always being teased? . . . What else?

Second, extend the *helping spirit* to your brothers and sisters, friends and classmates, and to adults too – your parents and teachers. If in 1979 you find how to help in these ways and to understand other children's troubles, then you will always remember this year and say, 'Gee, I really learned something in that International Year of the Child.' Here are some suggestions . . .

Ways You Can Help Others

- **Money-raising.** By means of ticket-selling, walkathons, etc., help raise money for projects to assist children in need.
- **Helping Other Children.** Think about all the children you know. Can you help classmates with things you are good at? Or by lending one of your possessions? Or – how?
- **Helping Brothers or Sisters.** Include younger ones in your games occasionally . . . Organise a whole-family project such as a backyard concert during holidays . . . What else?
- **Helping Parents.** Give them a break sometimes! Read stories to littlies on wet afternoons or volunteer to start a message-running service that operates without grumbling . . . What else?
- **Helping Teachers.** Offer yourself and friends as a Task Force to organise equipment, collect library books . . . What else?
- **Gifts Only You Can Give.** This year you might decide not to buy cards or presents – instead make your own. Here are some ideas . . .
 - ☐ **'Written Promises'.** Write out and present promises, e.g. 'Dear Dad, for Father's Day I'll clean the car and tidy the backyard' . . . 'Dear Mum, as an Easter gift I'll get the dinner on Saturday night' . . . 'Dear Brother, this promises an evening off the dishes' . . . 'Dear Sister, this promises you first choice of our TV programs this week'.

- ☐ **Write a Book.** Many kinds of book are possible. It could be a story you've written, with pictures as well as words. Or pictures and words about travel. Or stories, poems, jokes and puzzles that you have collected. Or a book all about yourself, an autobiography, perhaps for your grandparents.
- ☐ **Give a Poem.** Learn a poem (or song?) as a gift and recite to the birthday person. Or arrange a family concert.
- ☐ **Notes for All.** Write notes or cards for all members of the family, saying the nicest things you can think of about them. Or try ones like this:

D is for Dad who's
Always
Doing things for me.
Good any time – but especially on a Christmas tree!

Ways to Help Yourself

For IYC, promise yourself you will . . .

- ☐ Make at least one new friend.
 - ☐ Enjoy your favourite games even more.
 - ☐ Learn a new game.
 - ☐ Learn 'Hello', 'Goodbye', 'Thank-you' in another language.
 - ☐ Read six books about children in other countries.
 - ☐ Learn some Australian folk songs.
 - ☐ Write your doings regularly in your Journal.
 - ☐ Write letters to relatives and friends.
 - ☐ Tell your teacher what you like most at school.
- Surely you can add to this list?